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Editorial

Resist the imposition of added burdens on the people

The Filipino people must intensify their militant struggle against the US-Arroyo regime's plan to impose added burdens on them. It is their only weapon against the reactionary state's unbridled attacks on their livelihood.

The current intensification of the economic and fiscal crisis is proof of the

semicolonial and semifeudal system's inexorable decay. Big foreign capitalists relentlessly plunder the country's resources, causing the backward, agrarian and non-industrialized character of the country's economy—an economy in a permanent state of crisis.

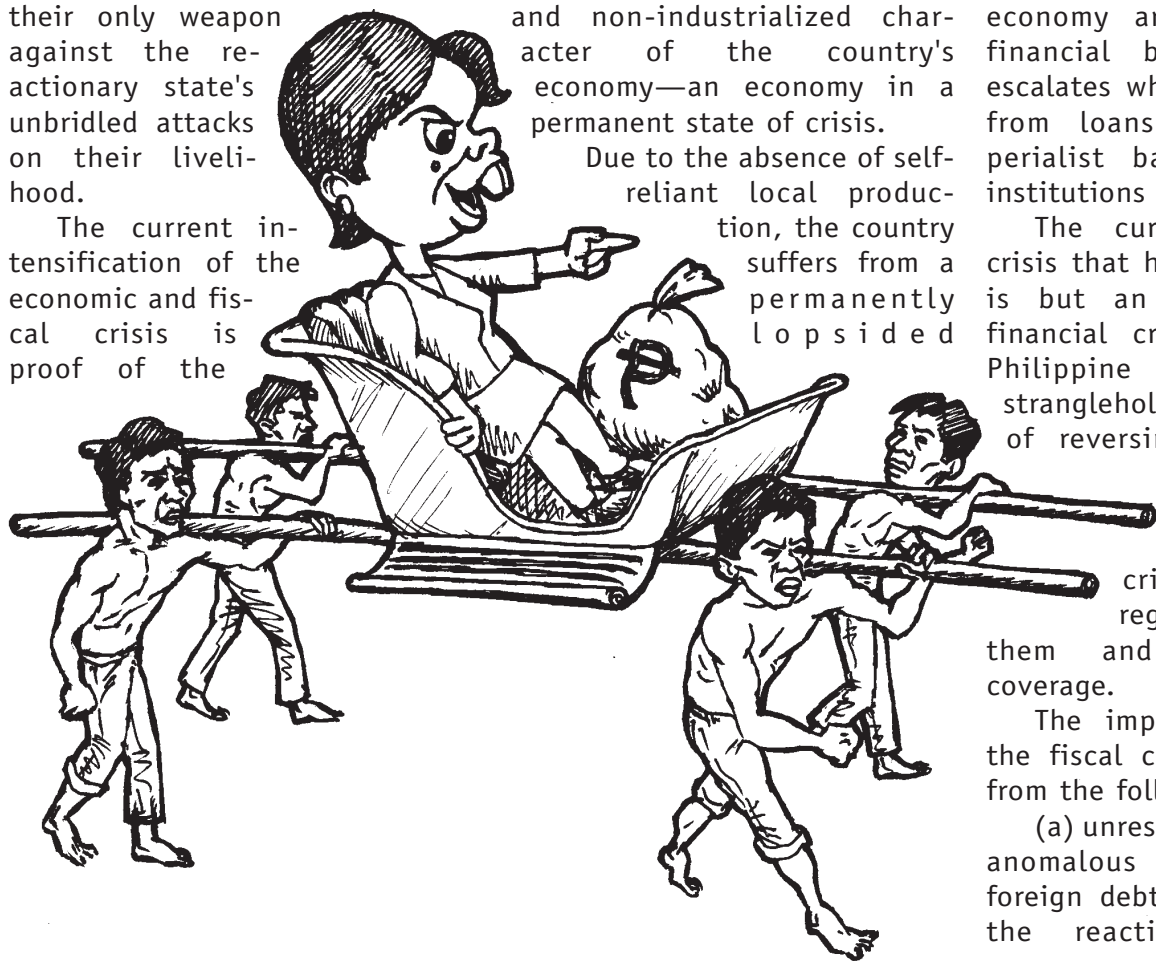
Due to the absence of self-reliant local production, the country suffers from a permanently lopsided

balance of trade. Big foreign capitalists unrestrainedly extract profit, and bureaucrat capitalists raid the nation's coffers without letup. The state and local economy are constantly in a financial bind. The problem escalates whenever bridge funds from loans provided by imperialist banks and financial institutions are insufficient.

The current severe fiscal crisis that has come to the fore is but an extension of the financial crisis that held the Philippine economy in a stranglehold in 1997. Instead of reversing the policies of trade and investment liberalization that led to the 1997 crisis, the Arroyo regime has perpetuated them and expanded their coverage.

The impending outbreak of the fiscal crisis directly results from the following factors:

(a) unrestrained payments for anomalous and unproductive foreign debts and the fact that the reactionary government



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allocates up to more than 60% of its budget to service these debts;

(b) a policy that grants tax exemptions to foreign investors and allows them to repatriate 100% of their profits and capital;

(c) a standstill in local production, particularly local manufacturing; and

(d) worsening corruption, especially among bureaucrat capitalists who collude with big businessmen in the latter's bid to avoid paying appropriate taxes.

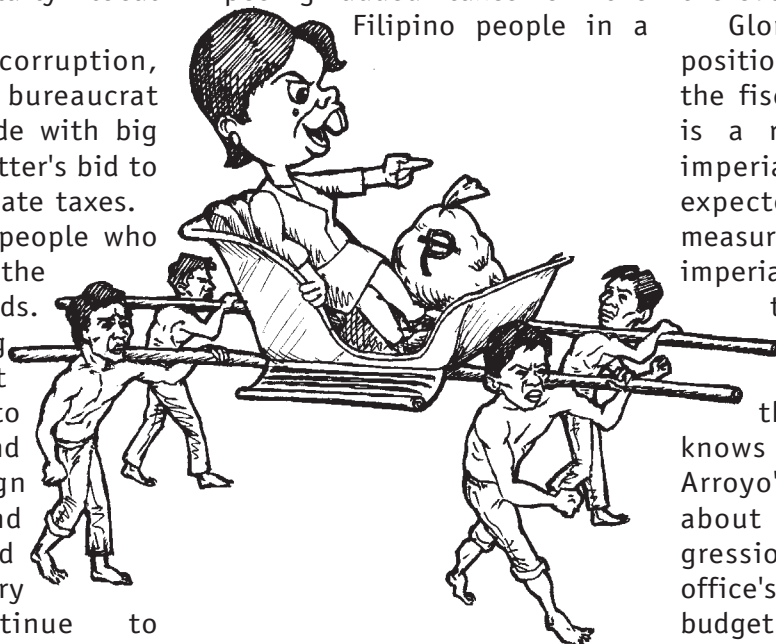
It is the Filipino people who suffer the most from the dearth of state funds. Even as the ruling state ensures that funds are available to service anomalous and unproductive foreign debts, health and education services and even other necessary infrastructure continue to deteriorate due to a severe shortage of funds.

Arroyo's sham solutions

All the sound and fury emanating from the Arroyo regime and bourgeois economists

about the possible explosion of a "fiscal crisis" in the next two to three years merely condition the public to swallow the poison pills that imperialism has been prescribing for the Philippines.

The Arroyo regime will be imposing added taxes on the Filipino people in a



desperate bid to generate more than P80 billion worth of funds for the government. It strains to conjure a "spirit of cooperation" to make the new tax burdens more palatable to a people

already mired in poverty.

None of these measures will resolve the fiscal crisis. Even if they generate additional revenue—at the price of the people's extreme suffering—they cannot eradicate the real roots of the ever-worsening fiscal crisis.

Gloria Arroyo is not in a position to provide a solution to the fiscal crisis. First of all, she is a rabidly loyal disciple of imperialism and cannot be expected to undertake any measure that would contravene imperialist-dictated policies on the Philippines. Secondly,

the Arroyo government is a government of thieves whose rapacity knows no bounds. Despite Arroyo's constant perorations about abolishing the congressional "pork barrel," her office's P1 billion "intelligence" budget and special discretionary funds remain untouchable. Suspicion is rife on the so-called "bayanihan fund" pooled from voluntary contributions of politicians and big businessmen.

Arroyo's measures redound to nothing but more suffering for the people in the form of added tax burdens with attendant hikes in the prices of electricity, water and other services and commodities. It is also the people who are expected to bear the brunt of so-called "austerity measures" through proposed budget cuts for health and education services. Meanwhile, amid calls for austerity, Arroyo and her retinue shamelessly carry on with their extravagant lifestyles, going on successive trips abroad and using expensive luxury vehicles, among others.

Intensify the people's unified resistance

The Filipino people must

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launch intensive struggles to thwart the Arroyo regime's attacks on their livelihood. Only through collective struggle can the people prevent the further decline of their economic status.

In the obtaining situation, it is the revolutionary forces' responsibility to lead the people's struggle against rising prices of petroleum products and spiralling costs of electricity, water and health and education services. It is of utmost importance to advance and intensify the struggle to increase workers' wages and salaries of government employees nationwide.

The revolutionary forces must harness through various means, the people's widespread anger and unleash it in massive street demonstrations. In the face of the Arroyo regime's obstinacy, only massive demonstrations of tens of thousands of people can prevent the imposition of added burdens on the people.

The intensified economic crisis exposes the rottenness and clearly shows the need to smash the present ruling system to pave the way for the establishment of a new, vigorous and progressive revolutionary order.

It is the revolutionary forces' responsibility to explain to the nation that only revolutionary change can provide a permanent solution to the chronic crisis gripping the Filipino people. **AB**

Errata

The sentence "The NPA ensures all soldiers and policemen that their rights will be respected" on page 2 of *AB*'s August 21 English edition should have read "The NPA **assures** all soldiers and policemen that their rights will be respected." The word "bribery" was also wrongly spelled as "brivery" in the Table of Contents. *AB* apologizes for these lapses.

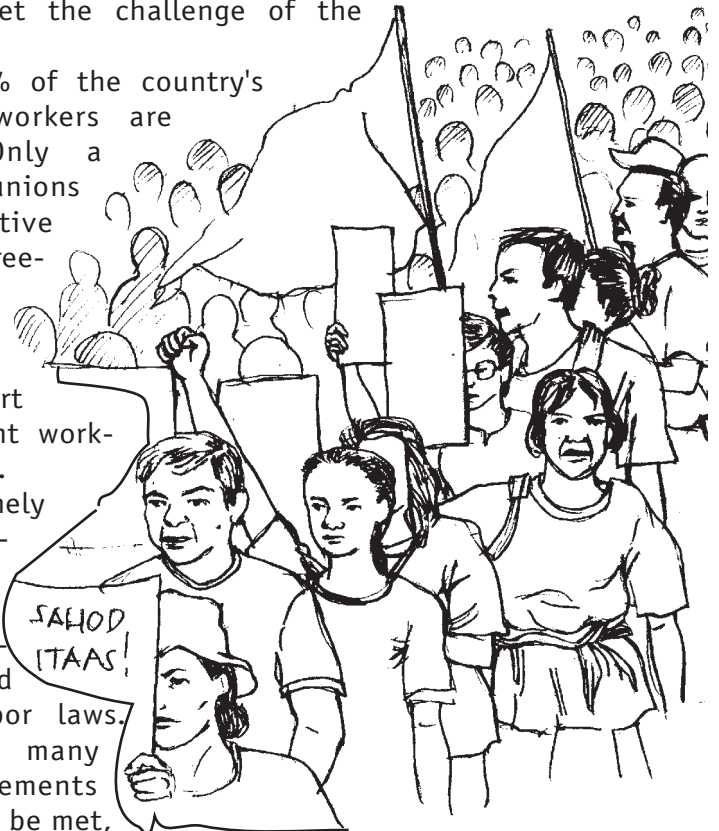
Aggressively expand the working class movement!

As the economy continues to be mired in a neverending crisis, there is greater need for a strong and extensive mass movement to defend the people from the crisis' deleterious effects. The key to achieving this in urban areas is to expand the militant workers' movement and its unions. The current economic crisis provides fertile ground for raising workers' consciousness and mobilizing them in their millions. But it also involves massive layoffs, factory closures and the dissolution of both existing unions and those still in the process of being organized. Therefore, not only is it important to increase the number of militant unions, it is likewise necessary to aggressively and quickly do so to meet the challenge of the times.

Barely 10% of the country's 36 million workers are unionized. Only a fraction of unions have collective bargaining agreements (CBA), and even fewer can be regarded as part of the militant workers' movement.

It is extremely difficult to organize unions under the country's pro-capitalist and repressive labor laws. There are so many legal requirements that must first be met, and registering a union with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) entails a very long process. It may take as long as two to three years before a union becomes legitimate. Then it must go through the proverbial eye of a needle to win recognition from the capitalist as a bargaining agent.

Worse, many existing and fledgling unions have been undermined, if not disbanded forthwith as soon as they engage the capitalists. Using repressive laws and tactics, such as assumption of jurisdiction (AJ) orders, capitalists in cahoots with the DOLE



crush militant unions and make sure that they are unable to regain any footing.

Nevertheless, none of this should deter the aggressive expansion of militant unions. The workers' movement has had long experience in organizing unions step-by-step even under the direst conditions and despite the most stringent laws.

The labor movement has earned many victories that must be used as bases to expand and hasten the pace of workers' organizing. There are militant federations and labor centers that should be used to reach out to many factories and enclaves that have never had unions. There must be closer cooperation between the national center and regional formations to further the expansion and consolidation of militant unionism, especially in the country's largest cities.

There are various approaches and tactics or any combination thereof that may be used to establish unions in the quickest time possible. As a start, associations or mass organizations may be set up to reach the biggest number of workers. This is most effective in factories and enclaves with strict anti-union policies.

These organizations will serve as the unions' partners in struggling for workers'

The labor movement has earned many victories that must be used as bases to expand and hasten the pace of workers' organizing.

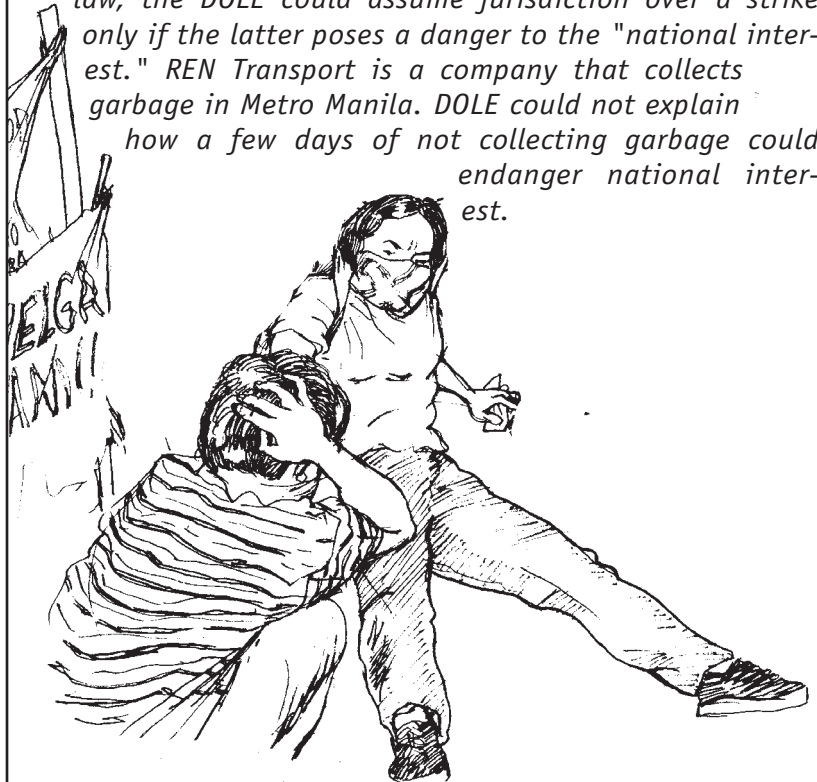
rights and welfare both within and outside the factories. They will also serve as a well-spring of militant union leaders and members.

These organizations can freely conduct expansion and consolidation work both within and outside factories. With the exception of strikes, they may launch protest actions and other kinds of collective action to assert union issues even while the union has yet to be established.

Even when the unions have been set up, these organizations may continue to advance various workers' issues. Their support further strengthens the unions. **AB**

Resist the AJ, onward with the strike

When the workers of REN Transport Corporation went on strike in July, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) immediately issued an "assumption of jurisdiction" or AJ Order. Through the AJ Order, the DOLE effectively stopped the strike and forced all the striking workers back to work. According to reactionary law, the DOLE could assume jurisdiction over a strike only if the latter poses a danger to the "national interest." REN Transport is a company that collects garbage in Metro Manila. DOLE could not explain how a few days of not collecting garbage could endanger national interest.



The AJ order is one of the most common and arbitrary tactics used by the reactionary state against workers. It is a potent weapon wielded by the regime to fight and crush militant unionism in the country. With the number of AJ orders she has imposed and the speed with which they are processed, it is not surprising that DOLE secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has been dubbed the "AJ Queen."

Despite the fact that over 382 unions filed notices of strike (NOS) from January to July this year, only 15 have actually been able to set up picket lines. Twenty-three out of the 382 unions were subject to AJ orders even before picket lines could be set up. Fifteen were subject to compulsory arbitration. Of those that actually went on strike, two were subject to AJ orders. Meanwhile, up to 386 impending strikes were automatically subject to preventive mediation. In these cases, the workers did

not even get to file notices of strike.

The DOLE boasts that the number of actual strikes and lockouts has gone down compared to previous years. Their statistics hide the overwhelming number of strikes that do not push through because they are subject to AJ orders or preventive mediation during the early stages.

The AJ order is almost always imposed on strikes against big foreign or local companies and even small corporations that happen to be owned by politicians or their associates. This August, strikes at Hacienda Luisita Incorporated and Sulpicio Lines were subjected to AJ orders. Prior to this, workers' strikes at the Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Central Azucarera de Tarlac (CAT), Lepanto Mining Corporation, Toyota Motors Corporation and others were likewise subjected to AJ. This was also the case a year ago with the strikes at Tritran Bus Lines, SM, La Tondeña, San Miguel Corporation and Nestlé.

The regime has a long and bloody record of breaking up strikes to enforce AJ orders. These technicalities cover up the widespread violation of workers' human and union rights. The Sulpicio Lines strike last month provides a glaring example. Elements of the AFP breached the Sulpicio workers' picket line commando style and shot at the workers to break up their strike. Fearing for their lives, the workers and their supporters were forced to abandon the picket



line, and eventually, their struggle.

So many unions have been busted because of the AJ tactic. A DOLE order in 2003 stipulates that union leaders and workers who continue to assert their right to strike should be terminated. In almost all of the cases mentioned above, union leaders and the strikes' most ardent supporters were automatically laid off.

There has yet to be a significant case where workers succeeded in having an AJ order reversed by questioning its legality. The very process is fraught with inutility because the cases have to be filed with the DOLE. Not surprisingly, the law rarely takes the workers' side. Even in cases where the workers do win, the law is powerless to enforce any judgment against the capitalists.

Defend the right to strike

In the face of blatantly pro-capitalist laws, workers are faced with the tremendous challenge of defending their right to strike. It is particularly important to oppose the use of the AJ tactic against the workers. Waging resistance against the AJ tactic will strengthen the entire workers' movement.

In many instances, workers confront the AJ tactic by continuing the strike. Actually, workers have no other choice—for them to allow their strike to be subjected to an AJ

order and to follow the DOLE's commands is tantamount to surrendering their struggle.

In advanced experiences, workers have been able to persevere and assert their right to pursue negotiations between their union and management despite the imposition of an AJ order. Among the successful experiences are the strikes at the Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Lepanto Mining Corporation and the Central Azucarera de Tarlac in 2003 and early this year. In these cases, workers courageously defied the AJ and the return-to-work orders issued by the DOLE.

United front. The workers confronted threats to break up their picket line by expanding and reinforcing their ranks. The political and even the physical and material support of their families and various sectors of

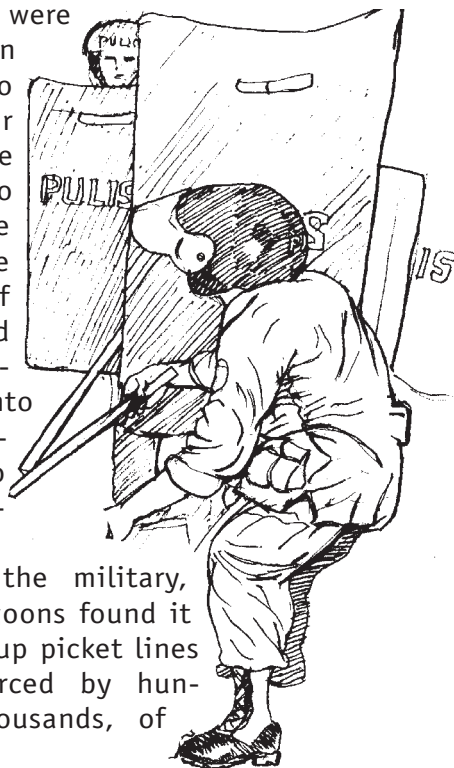
their community were major factors in their ability to continue their struggle. In the CAT strike, up to 5,000 people showed up at the picket line even if the company had only 1,000 workers. In the Lepanto strike, entire communities helped to defend and support the strike.

In the end, the military, police and hired goons found it difficult to break up picket lines that were reinforced by hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

Mediation by other forces. In a number of cases, workers refused to recognize mediation by the pro-capitalist DOLE. As a result, local government officials and other personalities who could be depended on to fairly weigh the interests of both sides served as mediators. In the case of Lepanto, it was the local mayor himself and representatives of the Bayan Muna party who acted as mediators in negotiations between the workers and management. In another case, the local government passed a resolution supporting the striking workers and calling for a speedy and decisive resolution to the strike. Local government officials also play a helpful role in restraining violence against the picket line.

Propaganda battle. Along with strengthening the picket line, it is important to continually propagate the workers' issues and expose the violations and hardships wrought by the capitalists. In the past, bringing the issues to radio, newspapers and television has helped immensely. More people were made aware of workers' conditions and the DOLE's pro-capitalist character through the media, generating sufficient interest and sympathy that forced the DOLE to a partial retreat and the capitalists to address the workers' demands.

All of these measures enable the workers to thwart the violence perpetrated by the regime. Above all, the key to a victorious strike is the union's resoluteness and preparedness to push through with it despite the threats posed by antiworker laws and the reactionary state's minions.



The Communist Party: Establishing roots in the workers' movement

"Year after year, the Party organization expands among the ranks of workers in Metro Manila," said comrades from the Communist Party of the Philippines' National Trade Union Bureau in an interview with *AB* in August.

The Party organization in the workers' movement in Metro Manila has more than recovered after being on the verge of dissolution right before the Second Great Rectification Movement was launched. By 1998, the number of Party members doubled.

Although the Party organization continues to expand and consolidate, various factors have prevented it from strengthening itself more rapidly. This includes, among others, the quick dissolution of unions and Party units in factories that close down or the massive layoff of workers as a result of the intense economic crisis. "Factories shut down or reduce their work force just as swiftly as we set up Party units," according to comrades.

Thus, there is need for a more rapid and more encompassing expansion campaign to exceed the quick pace at which Party units in the trade union movement are dissolved. This is carried out by continuously revolutionizing unions, launching political and economic struggles and conducting education work.

The rapid dissolution of units does not mean loss of membership. "We just have to make sure that workers who lose their jobs are quickly transferred to other Party units so they don't end up without collectives. Many of them transfer to other factories or work in their communities. Some of them also return to the provinces."

Many worker-members of the Party decide to continue their revolutionary work in the countryside as Red fighters. Some of them also become full-time labor organizers.

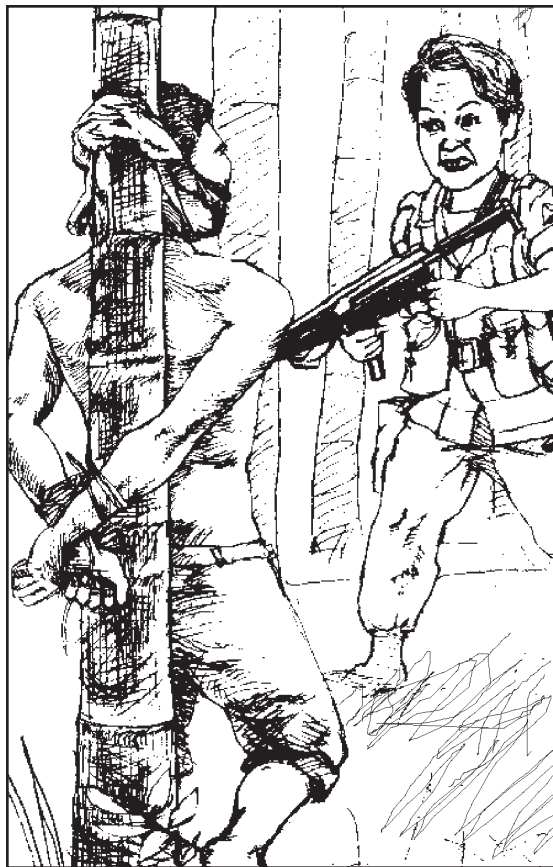
AB

State of human rights in the country

The state of human rights in the country is bound to worsen in the next six years under Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In an assessment of the Arroyo regime's record from 2001 to the first half of this year, KARAPATAN said it foresees a rise in human rights violations in the Philippines with the regime's enforcement of Arroyo's "strong republic" and its zealous advancement of the US' "anti-terrorist" war.

It may be recalled that before "Balance Piston 04-03" ended in Central Mindanao, AFP chief Gen. Narciso Abaya confirmed that 18 more joint military exercises between the US and the Philippines would be held this year. With the US' military presence and intervention in the country also on the rise, campaigns against the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-led armed rev-



olutionary movement waged by the New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

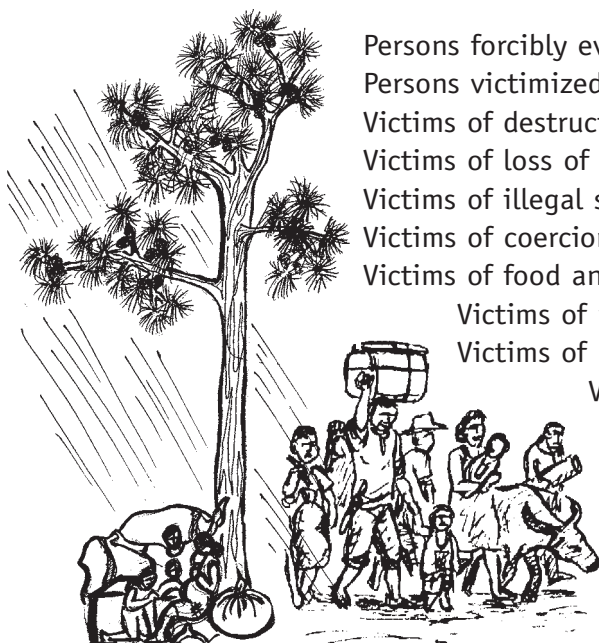
(MILF)-led Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Force (BIAF) are bound to intensify.

As the civil liberties of the broad masses are suppressed, the oppression and exploitation of the toiling masses are likewise expected to heighten due to non-stop attacks by the fascist state on the legal democratic movement. As a result, there will be more and more people arrested for political offenses but slapped with criminal cases.

Meanwhile, the regime continues to turn a deaf ear to the clamor for justice by victims of human rights violations, especially under the Marcos dictatorship. It remains uncertain when the 10,000 victims of human rights violations under martial law will be justly compensated despite court rulings in their favor both in the Philippines and the US.

AB

Growing list of human rights violations (2001-2004)



- Persons forcibly evacuated or rendered homeless: **113,211**
- Persons victimized by threats, harassment and intimidation: **26,093**
- Victims of destruction to property: **12,067**
- Victims of loss of property: **8,966**
- Victims of illegal searches: **5,786**
- Victims of coercion: **1,559**
- Victims of food and economic blockades: **1,337**
- Victims of physical attack: **1,289**
- Victims of "hamletting": **1,236**
- Victims of illegal arrest and detention: **1,191**
- Persons reconcentrated in "hamlets": **896**
- Victims of arbitrary and illegal detention: **676**
- Victims of summary execution/massacre: **319**
- Victims of torture: **183**
- Victims of attempted murder: **59**



NDFP consultant illegally detained

THERE are currently 248 political detainees being held in various prisons throughout the country, based on a June 2004 listing by KARAPATAN. The prisoners include National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant Eduardo Serrano, who is now detained in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro.

Serrano, together with two women, was captured by operatives of the Intelligence Service Group of the Philippine Army in Lipa City, Batangas in the morning of May 2. The military suspects that he is "Rogelio Villanueva" and "Ka Mac-liing," allegedly a high-ranking leader of the revolution-

ary movement in Mindoro.

Serrano was held incommunicado for nine days. Relatives, lawyers and members of human rights organizations went to various military camps and offices in search of him. He was eventually located by an official of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace (EMJP) in a detention cell in Calapan City on May 12.

The NDFP Peace Panel has asserted that in accordance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), Serrano should enjoy immunity from arrest and detention due to his status as an NDFP consultant in the peace negotiations.



Military abducts 3 BM members

THREE Bayan Muna (BM) members were abducted by elements of the Intelligence Service of the AFP in Sampaloc, Manila on August 18. To date, the police and military refuse to divulge any information regarding the fate of the three BM members.

Meanwhile, in Bohol, police arrested farmers Hermosila Villamor, 30 and Roldan Emance, 32 in the morning of July 26 in Barangay Kalbaryo, Lila. Villamor and Emance, who were accused of being Red fighters, were arrested by PNP elements who had earlier clashed with an NPA unit. The two farmers are currently jailed at Camp Dagohoy in Tagbilaran City.

ST, "killing fields" for activists

THE Southern Tagalog (ST) region has been dubbed the most dangerous place for progressive activists after the murder of 50-year-old Gabriela Women's Party coordinator Melita Trinidad Carvajal on August 27 in the City of Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Carvajal was waiting for a tricycle ride in front of her house when two persons approached her and shot her. She died even before she reached the hospital.

Up to 80 activists have been murdered in the region during Arroyo's three years in office.



Complaints vs. police, military lodged in Bulacan

ELEMENTS of the 306th Provincial Mobile Group led by Chief Insp. Alex Sitin indiscriminately fired their weapons, illegally searched houses and robbed residents of two barangays in Bulacan.

The troops arrived in Barangay Sta. Lucia on the night of May 27. They immediately cordoned off, strafed and entered the house of Alexander Tigas who was not home at the time. They stole Tigas' money and belongings. The police subsequently entered two more houses.

On May 30, at around one or two in the morning, 10 soldiers of the Philippine Army entered the house of Marcelo Miras in Sitio Coral, Barangay Maticitic in search of someone named "Rico." The soldiers left, taking with them Miras' bolo.

CAFGU robs villages in Maguindanao

CAFGU elements robbed barriofolk in Maguindanao who abandoned their villages at the height of clashes between Moro Islamic Liberation Front units and the Philippine Army from August 28 to 29.

According to the Joint GRP-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), CAFGU elements stole valuable belongings and resources owned by the barangays as well as carabaos, other farm animals, food and various other items from the villagers.

Up to 2,860 families (14,215 people) from the villages of Linantangan, Dalapdap, Pimbalakan, Bagumbong, Tukanalipao, Dugengen, Liab, Dabenayon, Dasikil, Pagatin and Puseo in the towns of Mama-sapano and Saudi Ampatuan in Maguindanao were forced to evacuate.



Townfolk demand pullout of 46th IB from Basey, Samar

RESIDENTS of Basey, Samar are demanding the pullout of abusive troops of the 46th IB. In a petition signed by more than 200 people on August 23, the townfolk demanded the cessation of military operations and the troops' withdrawal from the area. The petition was presented in a meeting of the Municipal Peace and Order Council (MPOC) attended by Mayor Vicente Labuac of Basey, the town's councilors, 801st Bde chief Gen. Anastacio Salud, and 46th IB chief Col. Manuel Ramos.

The MPOC meeting was called in the wake of complaints of military abuses by the townfolk, who had also filed a case with the office of the Commission on Human Rights in Eastern Visayas.

When their complaints were not acted upon, the Samahan han Gudti nga Parag-uma-Sinirangan Bisayas and the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR)-Tacloban launched a fact-finding mission in the hinterland barangays of Basey on August 20. Basey's municipal councilors also participated in the fact-finding mission. The mission confirmed cases of abuse by the 46th IB such as intimidation of children, destruction of crops and illegal ransacking of homes in the villages of Villa Aurora, Bulao and Cogon from August 7 to 17.

2 peasant leaders arrested in Bohol

ELEMENTS of the PNP and the Philippine Army 17th Special Forces Company illegally arrested and detained two peasant leaders in Bohol on August 13.

KARAPATAN-Central Visayas reported that at around 5:30 a.m., Felipeneri Bejasa and Ireneo Uchang were stopped at a checkpoint set up by the 17th Special Forces Company in Barangay Rizal, Catigbian. They had come from Tagbilaran City and were on their way to the town of Trinidad to attend a meeting by members of the Hiniusang Makinasodnong Mag-uuma sa Trinidad, which is affiliated with the Hugpong sa mga Mag-uumang Bol-anon (HUMABOL). Bejasa is the vice president of HUMABOL, while Uchang is an organizer of the Anakpawis party.

The military confiscated copies of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) signed by the GRP and the NDFP in August 1998 after rifling through Bejasa and Uchang's backpacks.

Charging that the CARHRIHL was a "subversive document," Bejasa and Uchang were brought to the Catigbian Police Office and detained. They were released at around 3:30 p.m., after the Bohol Provincial Police Office could find no evidence to use as basis for their continued detention.

Military strafes hut, kills pregnant woman, wounds husband, 3 kids

IT was around 6 a.m. on August 8 when soldiers indiscriminately rained bullets on the home of the Conge family in Barangay Uno, Catubig, Northern Samar. Twenty-seven-year-old Mely Conge was instantly killed after sustaining 17 bullet wounds. She was four months pregnant.

Her husband Sonny Sr., 27, and their three children—Sonny Jr., 10; Sammy, 8; and Gina, 6—were seriously wounded. Neighbors brought them to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital, where attending doctors said that the victims needed to be transported to Metro Manila for further treatment due the gravity of their injuries.

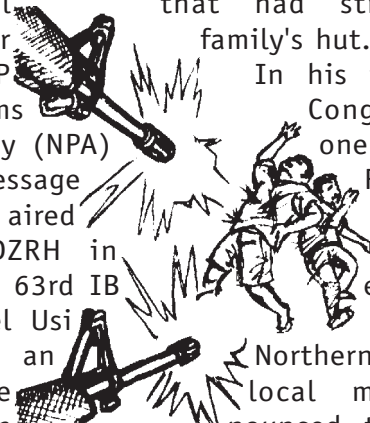
Four different versions of the

bloody incident were released by the government's armed forces in a bid to escape criminal liability. The day after the incident, the AFP claimed that the victims were New People's Army (NPA) members in a text message sent by the military and aired over radio station DZRH in Manila. That same day, 63rd IB commander Col. Manuel Usi told local reporters in an interview that the Conges had been harboring Red fighters. On August 10, the same official claimed that NPA guerrillas were responsible for the bloody incident. On the third day, the military released its fourth

version: it was an armed group that the AFP could not identify that had strafed the poor family's hut.

In his testimony, Sonny Conge Sr. identified one of the gunmen as Romy Acerbon, a neighbor who was also a CAFGU element.

KATUNGOD-Northern Samar and the local media have denounced the 63rd IB and 803rd Bde for restricting access to the victims. A squad of Scout Rangers stands guard over the family at the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital to prevent them from being interviewed.



Worsening media repression

At least 200 journalists from various parts of the Philippines rallied on August 16 in front of the Philippine National Police (PNP) headquarters in Camp Crame to assail the PNP's inutility in solving the numerous cases of media killings in the country.

Aside from the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) which led the protest action, 10 other media organizations joined the demonstration. Journalists in the cities of Bacolod, Gen. Santos, Iloilo, Cebu and Pagadian and the province of Antique also staged their own mass actions that day.

The journalists decided to demand justice for the slain members of the print and broadcast media because of the alarming number of media people being killed in the Philippines. The country now comes in second worldwide in the number of journalists killed in the line of duty. It is only wartorn Iraq that now outstrips the Philippines in this regard.

Since the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship in February 1986, at least 55 journalists have been killed in the country, according to the NUJP. *Bulatlat*, an internet newsletter, maintains a separate listing of up to 78 journalists killed since then. Including those killed during the martial law era, a total of 110 journalists have become murder victims, 20 of them slain under the Arroyo regime.

Six journalists have been

killed this year, four of them in the month of August. The figure almost equals the number of journalists killed in 2003.

All of those killed were known for their hardhitting criticisms of corruption and the involvement

of police, military, high-ranking government officials and big businessmen in various criminal activities.

Sonny Alcantara, a news presenter of City TV in San Pablo, Laguna was shot after criticizing a local city official. Rico Ramirez, reporter, cameraman and spinner of DXSF in San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, was killed in August 2003 because of his intense criticisms against illegal drugs and other crimes in his area. Noel Villarante, a commentator of DZJV in Laguna, was killed that same month due to his attacks on various anomalies. Bonifacio Gregorio, a columnist of *Dyaryo Banat* in Tarlac, was killed in July 2003 because of his hardhitting criticisms of government corruption, illegal drugs and the illegal conversion of farmlands into a commercial memorial park. The memorial park in question is owned by the mayor of La Paz, Tarlac. In April 2003, John Villanueva Jr., a progressive and courageous broadcaster with radio DZGB was killed

in Camalig, Albay.

Just this August, Arnel Manalo, a correspondent of the newspaper *Bulgar* and radio station DZRH, was killed in Bauan, Batangas after airing the side of one of the enemies of a powerful businessman in the province.

These are apart from cases of frustrated murder.

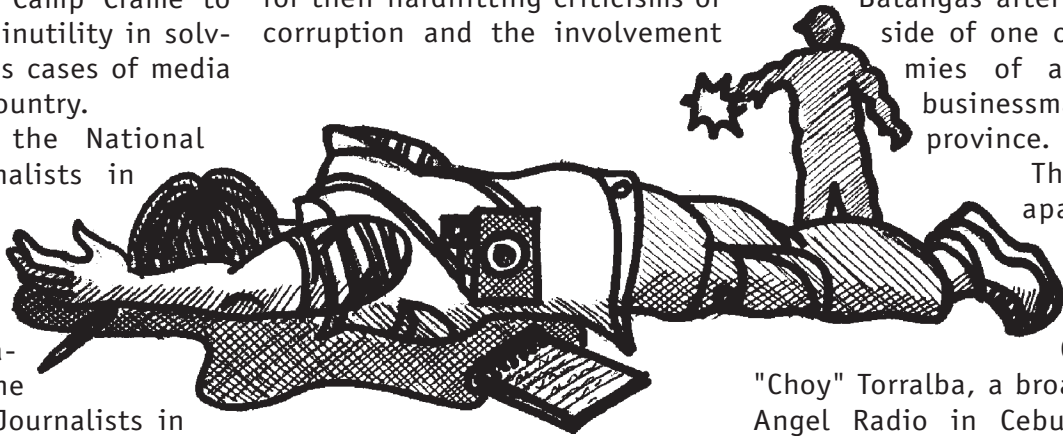
C i r s e

"Choy" Torralba, a broadcaster of Angel Radio in Cebu City was wounded in an ambush on June 8. Modesto Gutierrez, a commentator of DWSI in Santiago City, escaped death after a grenade was hurled at him on February 13.

In the face of all this, the Arroyo regime has shown no interest in eradicating worsening media repression. On the contrary, no less than the president's husband Mike Arroyo has joined the ranks of powerful people out to muzzle the media.

Just this August, he slapped libel charges against *INQ7.net* columnist William Esposo and *Malaya* officials Amado Macasaet and Rosario Galang after they implicated him in anomalies regarding the "charitable groups" he heads. Before this, Arroyo had also sued four other journalists for libel after they accused him of involvement in poll fraud in the May elections and in various cases of corruption.

Aside from those killed, far more media people have been harassed, threatened and mauled and fallen victim to other forms



of repression and human rights violations. Many of the cases remain unreported and have not been brought to the public eye.

This August, unidentified men tailed and threatened to kill one of Arnel Manalo's media colleagues and another co-worker was forced to go into hiding for a number of days after the two journalists disclosed in an interview that they knew who ordered Manalo's killing.

The NUJP recorded at least five cases of media harassment from February to June 2004.

Elements of the 20th Special Forces beat up *Southern Exposure* cameraman Melvin Mamis on May 31 and interrogated and threatened to kill him when he recorded on video a fact-finding mission in Rosario, Batangas.

Another journalist in Ozamis City was charged with libel merely for covering a protest action.

Mayor Caesar Dy of Cauayan City repeatedly ordered the closure of Bombo Radyo-Isabela for assailing cases of corruption and violence involving the Dy family in the province.

Rolando Bartolome, a broadcaster of DWBL, was suspended from work because of his criticisms of Gloria Arroyo.

The military tried to force off the air the weekly radio program Radyo Anakpawis, alleging that it was being run by the New People's Army. The program produced by the Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan airs over DZRB in Batangas City. The military and police also threatened to raid the station if it did not put a stop to the program.

Prior to this, the NUJP had recorded six cases of abduction and harassment of media people in the hands of police, military and paramilitary forces from October to November 2002. The most striking case involved Col. Jovito Palparan's harassment of Edu Paringit, a cameraman of Calapan City's local television station TVnet, merely for covering the violent demolition of shanties in the city.

That same year, three other journalists were abducted and several others threatened merely for reporting news critical of the military and the Arroyo regime.

The PNP's sole response has come in the form of Dir. Gen.

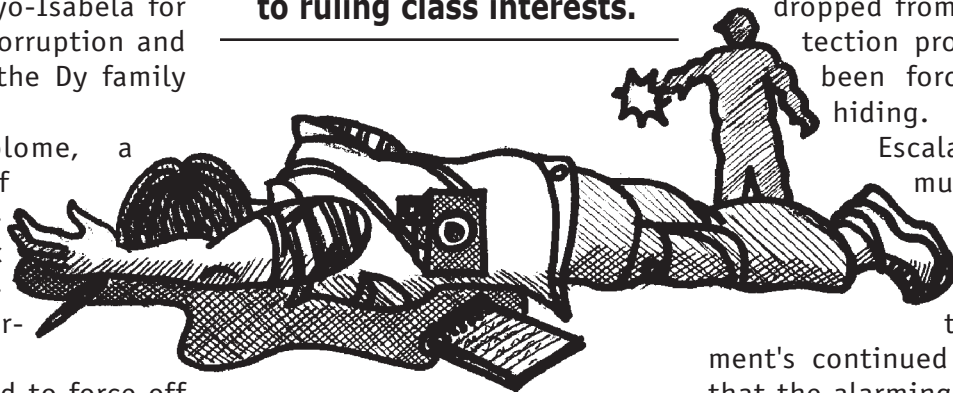
Escalating cases of murder and harassment of journalists and the reactionary government's continued inaction prove that the alarming trend of media killings is favorable to ruling class interests.

the media killings, saying he failed to see a trend in the number of media people being murdered.

That the PNP has been washing its hands of the matter should come as no surprise. In many instances, it is police elements themselves who are involved in murdering or harassing media people. Edgar Damalerio, a reporter of the *Zamboanga Scribe* and *Mindanao Gold Star* and a commentator of radio DXKP in Pagadian City was killed in May 2002 by a policeman. Despite the positive identification and arrest of P01 Guillermo Wapile, he was allowed to escape by his fellow policemen. Wapile has not been apprehended and has been allowed to go around Pagadian and other places in the province for the past two years. In fact, he even served as a politician's bodyguard in the last election.

Damalerio's family and other witnesses have recently been dropped from a witness protection program and have been forced to go into hiding.

Escalating cases of murder and harassment of journalists and the reactionary government's continued inaction prove that the alarming trend of media killings is favorable to ruling class interests. Threats to the lives and security of journalists dangle over their heads like the sword of Damocles and are an additional weapon wielded by the ruling classes to suppress exposés of their involvement in anomalies and other criminal and antipeople activities and to protect their interests. **AB**



Hermogenes Ebdane's "advice" to media people to just gag themselves to avoid becoming targets of violence, and an earlier piece of advice also from the PNP for journalists to arm themselves in self-defense. Gen. Angelo Reyes, the secretary of the Dept. of Interior and Local Government (DILG) which has jurisdiction over the PNP, also shrugged off

NPA launches tactical offensives in the Cordillera and Mindanao

Reyd in Kalinga. Red fighters took advantage of strong rains to attack a Philippine Army detachment at around 6 a.m. of August 25 in Barangay Balantoy, Balbalan. A CAFGU element was killed and five others were wounded.

The NPA's blocking force ambushed a composite group of Philippine Army and police troops sent as reinforcements in

Sitio Butod. Three policemen were wounded, including the officer in charge of the Balbalan police station.

Disarming operations in Mindanao. Seven Red fighters attacked a guard outpost of the MD Rio Vesta Agri Venture Plantation in Barangay Pangi, Maco, Compostela Valley on August 25. They disarmed three security guards of a shotgun, two

.38 pistols, a grenade and a communications radio.

Two days later, a group of Red fighters seized a .45 pistol from P01 Ruel Carrido while he was discoing in Mati, Davao Oriental on the night of August 27.



Protests greet Bush's nomination

DAILY protests battered the Republican Party national convention held in New York City from August 29 to September 3. The convention formally proclaimed George W. Bush as the Republican Party's official candidate in the US presidential election on November 2. Cries of "No more years!" reverberated in the streets as Bush accepted his nomination.

The United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) led hundreds of thousands of protesters. The group opposes the US' war of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq. The total mobilization came to 500,000 based on conservative estimates of the number of people who joined mass actions that began on August 28 and ended on September 3.

On August 28, up to 15,000 activists kicked off the protests with a rally assailing Bush's anti-abortion policy. As the convention opened on August 29, protesters led by Michael Moore, the well-known director of the documentary film "Fahrenheit 9-11" and the Rev. Jesse Jackson of the

Democratic Party launched a march that stretched over two miles. The 400,000-strong march



lasted over two hours. Among the marchers were 1,000 people carrying flag-draped coffins symbolizing American soldiers killed in Iraq. According to the Pentagon, 975 US soldiers have been killed in action and 6,916 have been wounded in Iraq since March 2003.

On September 1, demonstrators staged a three-mile long symbolic line of the unemployed. Protest organizers said three million jobs have been lost since 2000, with the situation turning for the worse when the Bush government launched its war on Iraq. Meanwhile, 45 million Americans do not have any healthcare coverage.

The protesters likewise criticized the government for its lack of funds for social welfare such as pensions and assistance for AIDS patients, among others. They also called for support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and the rights of immigrants and gays, and an end to the conflict in the Sudan.

The government deployed some 10,000 local police personnel, aside from SWAT teams, federal and state security forces and attack dogs in a desperate bid to stop the legitimate protests. Over 1,800 persons were illegally arrested and detained, exceeding the previous record set in protests during the Democratic Party's Chicago Convention in 1968, where 589 demonstrators were arrested.